DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 432 157 FL 025 918

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TITLE Multiple Perspectives on Academic Writing Needs.
PUB DATE 1999-03-00
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (33rd, New York, NY, March 9-13, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; *College Students; Economics Education; *Educational Needs; *English for Academic Purposes; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Language Research; Needs Assessment; Second Language Instruction; Student Attitudes; *Student Needs; Surveys; Teacher Attitudes; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Australia; University of Melbourne (Australia)

ABSTRACT

A study examines current approaches to assessing the academic writing needs of non-native speakers of English (NNSs), first by reviewing recent research into student writing needs and then by a survey of students, tutors, and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers. Critical examination of recent studies finds problems in both their approach and methodology and the underlying accommodationist ideology. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with four NNS University of Melbourne students of macroeconomics, three macroeconomics instructors, and three ESL teachers. It was found that interviewees sometimes expressed similar ideas about what is needed for successful academic writing, but also found differing perceptions both across the three groups and within them, especially concerning grammatical proficiency and the importance of language. Key issues for needs analysis and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction arising from the interviews are discussed, and possible alternative interpretations of particular "needs" are explored, highlighting the problem of definition in needs assessment. (Contains 31 references.) (MSE)

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ED 432 157

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON ACADEMIC WRITING NEEDS

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Paper presented at 33rd Annual TESOL Convention, NY, March 1999

ABSTRACT

The problem of syllabus design for an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course has led many university teachers to conduct research into the so-called 'needs' of their students. This paper briefly critically examines such studies and finds they have problems with both their approach and methodology and uncovers their underlying accommodationist ideology. The study reported here is an exploration of multiple perspectives on the academic writing needs of a particular group of university students who are non-native speakers of English (NNS). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with first-year NNS macroeconomics students, their content tutors and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Extracts from the interviews will be presented, showing how the interviewees sometimes expressed similar ideas about what is needed for successful academic writing, but more importantly, how there are differing perceptions not only across groups, but even *within* groups, especially relating to grammatical proficiency and the importance of language. Key issues for needs analysis and EAP arising from the interviews will be discussed and possible alternative interpretations of particular 'needs' presented, thus highlighting the problem of definition in needs analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

As teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or composition, who teach overseas or other NNS students, you're probably aware of the problem of syllabus design, which tends to be based on the so-called 'needs' of students. But what are 'needs'? How have previous researchers constructed needs analyses? And exactly why do we do them?

In the short time I have, I'll give a brief overview of popular classifications of 'needs' and also of previous studies of academic needs in general and academic writing needs in particular. Then I'll describe my own research which tries to draw out the multiple perspectives on academic writing needs of interested parties in a particular setting, illustrating the problem of interpretation of needs, and discussing some of the issues for academic writing needs analysis and EAP arising from the study. As I do this, I'll present possible alternative interpretations of particular 'needs', thus highlighting the problem of definition in needs analysis.

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2. TYPES OF NEEDS

Different researchers distinguish needs in different ways, eg. according to when they occur, who constructs them, or what the learner has to do in the language, etc. While such a variety of classifications sometimes reveals some interesting ways of looking at needs, the distinctions and overlaps between them are not always clear, and the labels given to them not always very illuminating.

Mackay and Bosquet (1981: 6) list four types of need: *"real, current needs;" "future hypothetical needs;" "student desires;"* and *"teacher-created needs."* It is interesting that current needs are deemed "real" when, depending on how they are assessed, they could be just as hypothetical as future needs. Similarly, why not student *needs* and teacher *desires*?

Determining "learning" needs is ostensibly the crux of Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) very influential learning-centred approach to teaching ESP, as opposed to a language-centred approach where needs are defined in terms of language use. Notwithstanding this distinction, their ESP needs analysis assesses both target needs, which include aspects of language use, as well as learning needs.

Perhaps one of the most disconcerting practices has been to differentiate between 'real' or 'actual' needs and students' mere 'wants' or 'desires'. This implies that what the learners themselves want or believe they need is somehow less real or valid than what other people say they need. This attitude is probably due to the 'expert-novice' distinction, where students are not thought to be either fully aware of or capable of expressing their 'real needs'. But even in a learner-centred approach, it seems the learners' views are canvassed and consensus about what to teach negotiated mainly to understand and maintain learner motivation.

The particular concept of needs adopted in any individual needs analysis clearly influences the approach to finding out what those needs 'are'. West (1994) describes the most common forms of needs analysis. While his classifications seem distinct enough however, other writers use slightly different ones.

So it's clear that *what* 'needs' are, *whose* they are, *who* to ask and *how* and *when* to find out about them are neither simple nor well-defined matters. The one question that has not been considered here yet is perhaps the most important: why? (Or

ultimately, for whom?) The most common (and most obvious) answer is "to help the learner". But as we have already seen by the slippery definitions of the concept of 'needs', we should be wary of being lulled into a false sense of security regarding the reason for needs analysis, as we shall see in a moment.

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES

When I looked at previous studies into academic needs in general and writing needs in particular, I found that as well as targeting various levels and disciplines, these studies have taken a variety of approaches, sometimes combining one or more, including the study of (see figure 1):

1. academic tasks, through surveys of students or content course teachers and examination of actual assignments;

2. the perceived importance or use of various academic skills,

3. content course teachers' reactions to NNS writing,

4. NNS students' writing problems.

While this is a convenient way of dividing and describing EAP needs analysis studies, they shouldn't be thought of as entirely discrete categories. However, the first two approaches can be classified as target-situation analysis and the last two as deficiency analysis, although it should be remembered that deficiency analysis by definition includes an element of target-situation analysis, or at least assumptions about the target situation.

Now, there are problems regarding the approach, methodology and ideology of these studies.

First of all, assessing needs from only one direction is insufficient. Although some of these studies did take more than one approach, most ended up by going to either content teachers or students for their information. And where two sources were used, only one approach was taken.

Figure 1 Previous studies of EAP needs

APPROACH	TYPE OF INFORMATION	METHOD OF GATHERING INFORMATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	EXAMPLE STUDIES
target-situation analysis	**academic tasks**	surveys	*students*	Kroll 1979; Ostler 1980
			content course teachers	Bridgeman & Carlson 1983; Eblen 1983; Casanave & Hubbard 1992; Jenkins, Jordan & Weiland 1993
		examination of	*actual assignments*	Horowitz 1986; Braine 1989
	the perceived importance/use of various academic skills	surveys, often involving the rating or ranking of skills	*NNS students*	Ostler 1980; Christison & Krahnke 1986; Leki & Carson 1994; Frodesen 1995
			content course teachers	Johns 1981; Bridgeman & Carlson 1983; Eblen 1983; Gee, Huxley & Johnson 1984; Casanave & Hubbard 1992; Jenkins, Jordan & Weiland 1993
			both	Zughoul and Hussein 1985
deficiency analysis	**content course teachers' reactions to NNS writing**	rating particular writing problems and errors for acceptability, etc.	*content course teachers*	Vann, Meyer & Lorenz 1984; Santos 1988
	NNS students' writing problems	surveys	*ESL teachers*	Vann, Meyer & Lorenz 1984;
			content course teachers	Bridgeman & Carlson 1983; Eblen 1983; Gee, Huxley & Johnson 1984; Casanave & Hubbard 1992
			NNS students	Christison & Krahnke 1986; Frodesen 1995
		interviews	*both composition course teachers and NNS students*	Crowe & Peterson 1995
		analysis of	*NNS writing*	James 1984

Next, closed questionnaires have been extremely popular for data gathering. While these are useful for collecting large amounts of information, they impose certain structures and schemes on respondents, guiding them to answer in ways they may otherwise have not.

And finally, none of these studies makes explicit its theoretical basis or ideological underpinnings, but it can be shown that the adoption of these approaches implies an objectivist epistemology and what Benesch (1993) calls "accommodationist" ideology (also referred to as "assimilationist"), which leads to the uncritical induction of students into traditional academic discourse, therefore maintaining the normative status quo.

4. THIS STUDY

When I got the idea for this study, I was working in the ESL Program at Melbourne University, and the Economics and Commerce faculty would request special courses for their international students. The ESL staff would consult with the Economics staff and the courses would be devised and run. However, they met with only limited success. Attendance tended to drop off very quickly and the next semester the Economics people would request another course, but with a slightly different focus, eg. reading to reading and writing.

So I became interested in what the economics teachers thought these international students needed and why, what we, the EAP teachers thought, and what the students themselves thought. So I decided to explore these various perceptions within the one context without imposing preconceived categories on the respondents. I attempted to do this by means of semi-structured interviews (with 4 students ("Sam", "Steve", "Simon" and "Sue"), 3 macroeconomics tutors ("Murray", "Mark" and "Matthew"), and 3 ESL teachers ("Eliza", "Emma" and "Ernie")) using two student writing samples (W1 and W2) as a starting point for discussion. I then drew common themes out of the data and coded for similarities and differences between individuals and groups.

I should emphasise here that this piece of research was not a needs analysis itself, but rather an exploration of multiple perspectives on academic writing needs in a particular setting and the issues they raise.

5. ISSUES

5.1 Markers' Expectations

One of the most restricting aspects on writing and judging writing as far as both the students and ESL teachers were concerned was the expectations of the marker. This is of course perfectly understandable from the students' point of view—they want to get good marks—and in this particular situation, also from the ESL teachers' perspective—they are not the ones marking the essays, and in order to assist such students, they need to be aware of the markers' requirements for a good essay.

However, when I asked the macroeconomics tutors how they communicated their expectations to their students, it seemed that they didn't always have strict requirements:

> Murray: I don't tell them a great deal about, in terms of content or what they should be saying. In fact the only thing I would say to them ...is ... there is no *right* answer, ... trying to emphasise that idea that there's judgments required as to what's required and what's not required in your essay.

This lack of clear guidelines for doing an assignment was troublesome for Simon, who finds that essay questions are often broad, with "too many" possible answers.

This conflicting desire for clear requirements on the part of the students and the relatively vague instructions given by the tutors could be translated into 'needs' in several ways (see appendix). One interpretation is that students need to be made aware that they are expected to make their own judgments about relevant content and then (somehow) taught how to do this. Another interpretation would be to say that the tutors need to be more explicit in communicating their requirements to students, which would be an objective not of an EAP course, but of a more politically sensitive economics staff development session. Or, the above conflict could be taken as a need for the students to be able to consult with their tutors when they are unsure of the exact requirements for an assignment. This avenue is in fact open to students, but they may not be aware of it. Whereas Simon says he consults tutors in different subjects all the time because he believes different markers have different ways of marking, Sue didn't think about asking her tutor for help at all.

This goes for interpretation of the wording of the question as well, which one of the students said can be a problem. This could be translated into at least three different 'needs'. Either a) the students need to be aware that they can consult their tutor if they can't understand the question, or b) they need to be shown how to analyse questions (assuming the problem lies with the student and not the wording), or c) the person who writes the assignment questions needs to be more careful. (Or all three.)

When Simon said that different tutors have different ways of marking, he was referring to different subjects, but it's clear that even within this macroeconomics subject where the tutors are given the same assessment criteria, differences in marking are apparent. Especially surprising was the enormous discrepancy between Murray and Mark's evaluations of W2. While both these tutors agreed that it was not as good as W1, Murray said he would give it about 15-16 out of 20, but Mark said he would fail it with about 3-4 out of 10.

The assessment criteria given to the tutors are also given to the students; however, each tutor weights those criteria differently and arrives at a mark holistically. Even though the tutors are aware that they don't all mark the same, they aren't particularly concerned about it.

> Mark: Although there may be some variation in teaching across the university,... we equip the students to deal with these things... I used to worry about that more than I do now.

His comment that students are equipped to deal with variations in teaching and marking is interesting. How are they equipped? Whose job is it to equip them? The content teacher's or the EAP teacher's? It could be inferred here that this is one of the students' academic needs—to "deal with" these variations. However, it could also be said that the tutors need to be more explicit about their personal focus in marking assignments, or that there is a need for moderation across tutors for every piece of assessment.

It follows that a target-situation analysis here would yield conflicting results. Leki (1995) also found differing teacher judgments of the same essays and points out that ESL classes are based on the assumption that "at least within the university, there is agreement on standards for writing beyond sentence-level concerns" (p. 40). Likewise, discipline-specific and adjunct EAP classes make the same

assumption but within a particular discipline or subject area. In our case, a target-situation analysis may go even further to reveal the need for *tutor-specific* EAP classes.

Even when students are aware of the assessment criteria, they may have problems addressing it in a way that is acceptable to the marker. For example, evidence of reading beyond the prescribed text was one of the criteria for the first macroeconomics assignment. The writers of W2 did this, as was evident from their footnotes, but they didn't always incorporate the outside material appropriately.

> Murray: I don't know if they understand what they're actually writing about. OK so there's sort of a sense of, you know, we've been told to read widely, we've found this, it looks good, and I'll put it in... It's one of those things you're a bit disinclined to criticise it 'cause they *are* doing as you've asked them to do.

So by attempting to fulfil one of the explicit requirements—reading beyond the prescribed text—these students have failed to fulfil another unstated expectation: appropriate and relevant integration of outside sources, which leads to the next issue: plagiarism.

5.2 Plagiarism/Integration of Sources

A great deal of academic writing involves integrating ideas from other sources and when this is not done well or in accordance with academic convention, it is often apparent to experienced readers. One of the ESL teachers pointed out that W2 had very uneven language control,

> Ernie: ... which suggests that there may have been fairly substantial sort of lifting of language from textbooks or whatever, but I wouldn't be certain about this.

When the reader is familiar with the relevant texts, it becomes even more obvious. One of the macroeconomics tutors related a story of a Chinese student who "copied a slab" from the text. He told her:

> Murray: I was that close to accusing you of plagiarism and taking out the full disciplinary procedures against you, but because you're a first year, if you were a second year...!

This comment reveals this teacher's expectation that students should be aware of and know how to avoid this serious 'crime' of plagiarism, but also that it may take time. It would also seem from his reaction that he thinks being a first year student is a better defence than being one from a different cultural background. However,

further discussion on this issue showed that he does see a difference between the attitudes of native and non-native speakers of English in this matter. Non-English-speaking background (NESB) students, he says, "don't realise how important it is". He also concedes that students who do commit plagiarism probably do so inadvertently. The obvious 'need' here is for NESB students to be able to avoid plagiarism. This is easy, according to Murray, as it merely involves the use of phrases such as "according to".

So a related need would be for these students to understand and be aware of the importance of the concept of plagiarism. However, there is another perspective. Perhaps the teachers need to be aware of different understandings of textual borrowing and ownership, as discussed by Pennycook (1996), which might then encourage them to take a different approach to warning about and penalising 'plagiarism'.

From the students' point of view, the underlying cause of plagiarism is not so much ignorance, but difficulty in understanding the reading materials.

> Steve: I find it really difficult to understand those [outside] texts and the materials. They are so *different* from the textbooks. Even when I have to do the assignment I have to basically like take every single word from a paragraph rather than rewrite it in my own words.

5.3 Other Skills

So the 'need' now becomes more fundamental: reading comprehension. Listening to lectures also is important from the students' perspective, and speaking and participating in tutorials was seen by one economics tutor as extremely important for learning, whereas another one believed written assignments were more likely to stimulate intellectual growth.

5.4 NS vs NNS Writing/Effect of language on marks

It is perhaps predictable that the ESL teachers recognised the writing samples as being written by NNS because of the grammatical errors present, especially surface errors, since they are exposed to such writing all the time. In contrast, the macroeconomics tutors all professed not to notice the language background of the writers from their grammar, even with W2, with which the ESL teachers identified multiple language problems.

This may come as a surprise to experienced ESL teachers for whom grammatical errors seem to leap off the page, and for whom the obvious 'need' for NNS students here would be grammatical proficiency because language errors:

> Emma: stigmatise them as... non-native writers so, it's important in that sense.

Except that, at least according to the macroeconomics tutors interviewed, it does not stigmatise them at all. Therefore, if these students do not want to be recognised as second language writers by their content teachers, then their 'need' is quite different.

> Mark: The only way I'd be able to tell [NNS from NS writing] is *not* by their use of grammar, but by their rather, well, stylised use of diagrams and other things... Non-native speakers often tend to be more technical... they tend to substitute diagrams and mathematics for clear explanations.

This description of non-native writer behaviour accords with Steve's description of his own performance in the essay questions in his last exam:

> Steve: I just draw some graphs... and I didn't even bother to explain the thing.

This student's use of the phrase "I didn't even bother" implies that he believed he *should* have given, and therefore needs to be able to give, an explanation as well as a diagram.

As well as the use of diagrams, the same tutor notes another difference between NS and NNS writing.

> Mark: Native speakers tend to bring a lot more verve and perhaps in some senses, context, to their writing, in that...they can pick up the theoretical work and completely supplant that into any other sphere.

While he notices the difference between the two groups of writers, he denies it has an effect on the way he marks.

> Mark: That is really the difference between, in many cases, the good answers by English-speaking students and the best answers by non-English-speaking students... They both would get ten out of ten, but they just approach the question in different ways.

This illustrates the effect of the reader on reading and relates back to the issue of the marker's expectations. In universities where the lecturers and tutors are from a variety of cultural backgrounds (and Melbourne University is certainly one), should we still be trying to teach students the 'standard Western' way of

organising or writing an essay, or should we be trying to make both teachers and students (NS and NNS alike) aware of the variety of ways in which a written assignment can be approached, or what Ballard (1984: 51) describes as ways of "thinking" in accordance with different cultural standards?

If ESL students 'need' to sound more 'native' (and why else would they be seen to need EAP instruction while NS students do not?), and if one of the most obvious differences between NS and NNS writing is grammatical accuracy (according to the ESL teachers), how does this difference in accuracy influence evaluation of their writing?

5.5 Effect of Language on Marks

Overall, the students believed that their language proficiency does have an effect on their marks, whereas the macroeconomics tutors don't because it would not be "appropriate".

Similarly, the ESL teachers do notice language errors but also assume a certain amount of leniency on the part of the markers.

> Emma: It [language in W2] really stops the meaning. Apart from the irritating factor because there's quite a lot of surface level errors, there are quite a few occasions where the meaning doesn't come across, it's really hard. Unlike [W1] where it's more surface level errors, the meaning comes across it's sort of agreement type errors that I don't think that group of writers will probably lose many marks for that.

Once again, these comments could be interpreted as conflicting 'needs'. The students believe they need higher linguistic proficiency to gain better marks, and the ESL teachers' comments point to a need for grammatical accuracy to avoid irritation and stigmatisation at the surface level and for clarity of meaning at a deeper level, while the content teachers do not see this as an issue.

The economics tutors' claim that they do not mark language down has not been tested, but they would be unlikely to always be able to extract intended meaning from non-standard English. Only one of the economics tutors conceded that this may happen with a very badly written essay.

> Murray: I'd be reluctant to give good marks unless it's quite clear that they really do understand what they're on about. So they wouldn't lose marks for bad English other than the fact that I don't *really* know what they *really* understand.

This raises the much debated issue of the content-language distinction: at what point is it possible to separate the two and judge a problem as being due to one or the other?

5.6 Content-Language Distinction

Steve sees himself as having grammar problems only; Sue is sure her problems are with the economic concepts; the macroeconomics tutors only see language as a problem if it is *really* bad; and the ESL teachers admitted they did not really read the essays for content. Therefore it is not surprising that the macroeconomics tutors think Sue needs content work and the ESL teachers think she needs grammar work.

Emma expresses the problem in a way EAP teachers will relate to:

> Emma: Content and language are related and sometimes very hard to draw distinctions. On surface level areas perhaps, you can talk about purely grammatical problems a student may have... but there reaches a point where you can't.

This view, however, was not taken by Mark when I asked him whether what he saw as inconsistent arguments in one of the writing samples could be due to a language problem. He commented:

> Mark: If it were purely a language problem then I think that that would manifest itself very clearly. For example, some of the use of words here are not entirely unsophisticated. There aren't really very many grammatical errors. In fact I would have no idea that...it was written by a non-English speaker.

The relative lack of metalinguistic awareness of content teachers, of understanding of content by EAP teachers, and possibly of both by students, creates a situation where identifying the 'real' problem or need is almost impossible.

Much has been written about the content-language divide so I won't go into it here, but perhaps the most frustrating area of content misunderstanding/language misuse is vocabulary (Santos 1988). There is also disagreement between the two groups of teachers about whether an understanding of basic vocabulary is a strong enough basis for an understanding of specialised concepts:

> Emma: They can understand the word 'demand' but whether they understand the *concept* of demand...
>
> Murray: If they know what the word means, they can probably understand the economic theory.

However, two of the students and one economics tutor specifically mentioned including economics terminology in a special course and another of the economics tutors cited inappropriate word use as often being a hindrance to understanding. This raises the issue of discipline-specific language and discourse.

5.7 Discipline-Specific Language

The ESL teachers all agreed that there are different needs for different subjects, relating to the particular task types required of students and the discourse style of each discipline. Murray was also aware of the specialised discourse of economics:

> Murray: It would be *very* difficult to pick out at all that it was an overseas student who had written it. Their ability to write answers is fine. It may be because they simply look at the economic textbook and perhaps they're speaking and writing in economics rather than writing necessarily English.

The notion of specific versus general knowledge and skills and whether students are better served by one or the other is much debated in the ESP literature. Aware of the limitations of ESL teachers teaching subject-specific writing, many recommend liaising with experts in the discipline. Such a process would help the EAP teacher who finds him/herself in the situation where:

> Ernie: It's hard to judge... what in one discourse is a stylistic inaccuracy or infelicity is acceptable, things like use of articles, compound terms and so forth.

This notion of discipline-specific language and the perceived overlap between language and content give rise to the issue of who should be teaching what and why.

5.8 Role of ESL and Content Teachers

Beyond mere consultation is the possibility of *sharing* the teaching of EAP. This is the ESL teachers' preferred mode for a discipline-specific EAP course, based on previous experience.

The need for the content teacher's presence is based on the EAP teacher's desire for the course to seem valid to the students, and the inevitable problem of divorcing content from language.

Nevertheless, in any course, the problem of mismatch between teachers' perceptions of needs and students' expectations and desires still exists. Although

the Economics department had specifically requested a reading and writing course for their international students the year before,

> Emma: It became clear that what they [students] really wanted was an explanation of the concepts, they were finding difficulty with the *content* matter rather than language.

Murray conceded that it was likely that the NNS students have problems with the language and concepts of economics as it is taught. In this situation, who should teach these students in a special course? Murray believes the best person would be an ESL teacher because it is:

> Murray: more of a teaching issue than economics.

However flattering this type of comment is for ESL teachers, they all disagreed they would be the best people to teach economic concepts, not only because they felt unqualified to, but more because it is simply not their role to.

> Emma: You could turn it the other way and say all lecturers should be trained ESL teachers.

Translating this issue into 'needs', we face three alternatives: either the NNS students need to be taught subject-specific concepts by an EAP teacher or a content teacher or both. Conversely, we could also say that EAP needs to be taught by either an EAP teacher or a content teacher or both.

However, one of the ESL teachers involved in designing the last English for Economics course does agree with Murray on the other aspect:

> Emma: That was a really thorny issue because I remember when we went to the meeting with the lecturers, X and I, and found their perceived problems, the immediate thing that came to mind was that they need to perhaps rethink about their teaching methodology, but we're not the ones to tell them that.

This is where the ESL teachers believe the relationship between content and EAP staff is paramount.

Apart from the issue of clear demarcation of roles, the issue of the EAP teacher's general responsibilities also emerged. Eliza and Emma have different opinions about their role in offering language support to students:

> Elizabeth: I don't [focus only on grammar], well I suppose it depends on your definition of grammar, but I read- what I try and do is read through an assignment and if there are questions of what *I* think, logic or irrelevancies or something, I ask questions, but for me, you know, that's a *part* of language.

> Emma: [Commenting on whether the conclusion is supported by the argument provided in the writing samples]:
>
> That's beyond what I think I need to do here.

These differing degrees of focus on content/argument directly relates the content-language issue to the definition of EAP, and therefore to the role of the EAP teacher.

Finally, this issue of teachers' roles raises the issue of the content lecturers' expectations of what can be achieved by ESL staff, and that of course goes back to what they think the students need.

6. CONCLUSION

So we can see that the perceptions of the interviewees in this study can be variously interpreted as sometimes converging, but often diverging 'needs', and that it is not always appropriate to talk about group perceptions of students' needs or even of group positions on particular issues. However, we can and should talk about the variety of perceptions held and the issues and assumptions involved in determining the academic needs of our students, which tends to be lacking in current needs analysis frameworks. Although the aim of this research is not to provide an alternative framework, it does show, in one particular context, the complexity of academic writing 'needs', how they are perceived and how they should be addressed. By making assumptions about others' perceptions and expectations, or ignoring them completely, we risk not only losing a significant part of the complete picture, but distorting what we do get. The issues raised in this study are not new, but we should not ignore them because they do not conveniently fit into our usual means of identifying needs.

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8. APPENDIX

Issues Arising & Various Interpretations of "Needs"

1 Markers' Expectations

i) a) Students need to be made aware that they are expected to make their own judgements about relevant content;
   b) tutors need to be more explicit in communicating their requirements to students;
   c) students need to be able to consult with their tutors.

ii) a) Students need to be aware that they can consult their tutor if they can't understand the question;
   b) they need to be shown how to analyse questions (assuming the problem lies with the student and not the wording);
   c) the person who writes the assignment questions needs to be more careful.

iii) a) Students need to be able to "deal with" variations in teaching and marking;
   b) tutors need to be more explicit about their personal focus in marking assignments;
   c) there is a need for moderation across tutors for every piece of assessment.

iv) Tutor-specific EAP classes!

2 Plagiarism/Integration of Sources

i) Students need to be able to avoid plagiarism.

ii) Students need to understand and be aware of the importance of the concept of plagiarism.

iii) Teachers need to be aware of different understandings of textual borrowing and ownership (Pennycook 1996).

iv) Need for reading comprehension skills.

3 Importance of Other Skills *(Reading, Listening, Speaking)*

4 NS vs NNS Writing

i) Grammatical proficiency (*according to ESL teachers*).

ii) Ability to clearly explain diagrams (*according to macroeconomics tutors & students*).

iii) Need to make both teachers and students (NS and NNS alike) aware of the variety of ways in which a written assignment can be approached.

5 Effect of Language on Marks

Need for higher linguistic proficiency to:

i) gain better marks; (*according to students*)
ii) avoid irritation and stigmatisation; (*according to ESL teachers*)
iii) achieve clarity of meaning (*according to ESL teachers*)

6 Content-Language Distinction

i) Impossible to identify 'real' need?

ii) Economics terminology

iii) Appropriate word use.

7 Discipline-Specific Language

Need for EAP teachers to liase with content experts.

8 Role of ESL and Content Teachers

i) Need to share teaching.

ii) NNS students need to be taught subject-specific concepts by:
   a) an EAP teacher;
   b) a content teacher;
   c) or both.

   Conversely, EAP needs to be taught by either an EAP teacher or a content teacher or both.